Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended) ~~An~~ One or more computer-readable storage media having stored thereon an application programming interface (API) for communication between an administration server and an authentication server ~~connected via a data communication network, said administration server providing a service associated with a namespace to one or more users on the data communication network~~, said API comprising computer-executable instructions for:

associating a plurality of namespaces with a plurality of administration servers, wherein each of the namespaces is associated with one of the plurality of administration servers, each of the administration servers providing a service relating to the associated namespace for one or more user accounts of the namespace, said authentication server and said administration servers being connected via a data communication network, said user accounts of the namespaces being managed by the authentication server, said authentication server being authorized to authenticate the user accounts of the namespace;

receiving, by the authentication server, a request from one of the administration servers, said authentication server having a database associated therewith storing authentication information for authenticating the user[[s]] accounts of each of the ~~namespace service~~namespaces, said one of the administration ~~server~~servers being responsive to an administrator for issuing ~~at least one~~ the request to said authentication server, said request specifying at least one action ~~to be performed in relation~~relating to the administration of the user accounts in the namespace[[,]] associated with said ~~API comprising instructions~~one of the administration servers for[[:]] managing the database to be performed by the authentication server to the namespace;

~~receiving, by the authentication server, the request from the administration server;~~

verifying, by the authentication server, authority of said one of the administration ~~server~~servers to issue the request received by the authentication server; and

performing, by the authentication server, the action specified by the received, verified request.

Claim 2. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein the database associated with the authentication server stores authorization information relating to the administration ~~server~~servers and wherein verifying the authority of said one of the administration ~~server~~servers to issue the request comprises identifying said one of the administration ~~server~~servers and locating corresponding authorization information for the administration ~~server~~servers in the database associated with the authentication server.

Claim 3. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 2, wherein identifying said one of the administration ~~server~~servers comprises examining an encrypted ticket accompanying the request, said ticket identifying the administrator.

Claim 4. (canceled).

Claim 5. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises reserving the namespace with the authentication server to prevent an unauthorized user from obtaining an account in the namespace, said request including a domain name associated with the namespace, and further comprising:

requesting, by the authentication server, domain information for the domain name included in the verified request from a domain name service;

determining, by the authentication server, authority of said one of the administration servers to reserve the namespace by comparing the received domain information with the verified request; and

reserving the namespace only if said one of the administration servers is authorized to make the request and reserve the namespace.

Claim 6. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 5, wherein reserving the namespace comprises creating an administrator account associated with said one of the administration ~~server~~servers to manage the namespace.

Claim 7. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises releasing the namespace to allow any user to obtain an account in the namespace.

Claim 8. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises maintaining and editing a namespace administrator list.

Claim 9. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 8, wherein editing a namespace administrator list comprises adding at least one administrator to the namespace administrator list.

Claim 10. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 8, wherein editing a namespace administrator list comprises deleting at least one administrator from the namespace administrator list.

Claim 11. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises editing one or more user accounts in the namespace.

Claim 12. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 11, wherein editing one or more user accounts in the namespace comprises creating at least one user account in the namespace.

Claim 13. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 11, wherein editing one or more user accounts in the namespace comprises resetting a namespace password associated with at least one of the user accounts.

Claim 14. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 11, wherein editing one or more user accounts in the namespace comprises removing at least one of the user accounts from the namespace.

Claim 15. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 11, wherein editing one or more user accounts in the namespace comprises editing a profile associated with at least one of the user accounts.

Claim 16. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 11, wherein editing one or more user accounts in the namespace comprises changing a sign-in name associated with at least one of the user accounts.

Claim 17. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises:

listing user accounts associated with the namespace; and

evicting one or more of the user accounts from the namespace.

Claim 18. (canceled).

Claim 19. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises auditing actions within user accounts associated with the namespace.

Claim 20. (currently amended) The ~~API~~ computer-readable storage media of claim 1, further comprising returning a success response from the authentication server to said one of the administration ~~server~~servers if the request was received, said one of the administration ~~server~~servers was verified, and the specified action was performed successfully.

Claim 21. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein performing the specified action comprises returning an error response from the authentication server to said one of the administration ~~server~~servers if the request was received, said one of the administration ~~server~~servers was not verified, or the specified action was performed unsuccessfully.

Claim 22. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein the API is based on a simple object access protocol (SOAP).

Claim 23. (currently amended) The ~~API~~computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein the instructions are computer-executable instructions stored on one or more computer readable storage media.

Claim 24. (currently amended) A method for delegating at least one administrative task from a first system to a second system, said ~~first and second systems connected via a data~~

~~communication network, said second system providing a service associated with a namespace to one or more users on the data communication network, said~~ method comprising:

maintaining, by a first system, a database of one or more namespaces ~~including the namespace~~, said first system being connected to a plurality of second systems via a data communication network;

associating the namespaces with the plurality of second systems, wherein each of the namespaces is associated with one of the plurality of second systems, each of the second systems providing a service associated with the associated namespace to one or more user accounts of the namespace on the data communication network, said database ~~being~~ maintained by the first system including the namespaces associated with the plurality of second systems;

receiving a call from one of the plurality of second ~~system~~systems by the first system, said call providing a request that at least one routine be performed to implement a desired administrative task for managing the ~~database~~user accounts of the namespace associated with said one of the plurality of second systems; and

executing the routine, by the first system, in response to the call received from said one of the plurality of second ~~system~~systems to implement the administrative task.

Claim 25. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the routine comprises an application programming interface (API) for performing the administrative task.

Claim 26. (original) The method of claim 25 wherein the API is implemented according to a simple object access protocol (SOAP).

Claim 27. (original) The method of claim 24 further comprising generating an error response if an error occurs during execution of the routine.

Claim 28. (currently amended) The method of claim 24 wherein the first system is a multi-site user authentication system and said one of the plurality of second ~~system~~systems is an affiliate selected from the group consisting of an application service provider (ASP), an Internet service provider (ISP), a namespace owner (NSO), and a namespace provisioning (NSP) partner.

Claim 29. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the administrative task comprises reserving at least one of the namespaces to prevent an unauthorized user from obtaining an account in the reserved namespace.

Claim 30. (currently amended) The method of claim 29 wherein said one of the plurality of second ~~system~~ systems is associated with an ASP and wherein reserving at least one of the namespaces comprises reserving, by the ASP, at least one of the namespaces on behalf of a customer of the ASP.

Claim 31. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the administrative task comprises releasing at least one of the namespaces to allow any user to obtain an account in the released namespace.

Claim 32. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the database maintained by the first system stores a list of namespace administrators corresponding to at least one of the namespaces and wherein the administrative task comprises editing the namespace administrator list.

Claim 33. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the administrative task comprises editing at least one user account in at least one of the namespaces.

Claim 34. (original) The method of claim 33 wherein the administrative task comprises changing a sign-in name associated with one or more of the user accounts.

Claim 35. (currently amended) One or more computer readable storage media having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 24.

Claim 36. (currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium having computer-executable components for delegating at least one administrative task from an authentication system to ~~at least one~~a plurality of administration systems~~, said authentication system and said~~

~~administration system connected via a data communication network, said administration system providing a service associated with a namespace to one or more users on the data communication network~~, said components comprising:

an identifier component for maintaining a database of one or more namespaces, said database being maintained by ~~the~~ an authentication system, said authentication system being connected to a plurality of administration systems via a data communication network, said authentication system associating a plurality of namespaces with the plurality of administration systems, wherein each of the namespaces is associated with one of the plurality of administration systems, said administration systems providing a service associated with the associated namespaces to one or more user accounts of the namespace on the data communication network;

an interface component for receiving a call from one of the administration ~~system~~systems by the authentication system, said call providing a request that at least one routine be performed to implement a desired administrative task for managing the ~~database~~user accounts of the namespace associated with said one of the administration systems; and

an operation component for executing the routine, by the authentication system, in response to the call received from said one of the administration ~~system~~systems to implement the administrative task.

Claim 37. (currently amended) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 36, wherein the interface component comprises an application programming interface for implementing the routine.

Claim 38. (currently amended) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 36, wherein the routine comprises computer-executable instructions for:

reserving at least one of the namespaces to prevent an unauthorized user from obtaining an account in the reserved namespace;

editing one or more user accounts in the namespace;

maintaining and editing a namespace administrator list; and

releasing the reserved namespace to allow an unauthorized user to obtain an account in the namespace.

Claim 39. (currently amended) A system for authenticating at least one user of a namespace service, said system comprising:

one or more user databases storing authentication information for user accounts of a plurality of namespaces;

an authentication server for communicating with the database via a data communication network; and

a plurality of [[an]] administration ~~server~~servers for communicating with the authentication server via the data communication network, said plurality of administration ~~server~~servers being associated with the plurality of namespaces and providing the namespace service, wherein each of the namespaces is associated with one of the plurality of administration servers, said administration ~~server~~servers being responsive to an administrator for issuing at least one request to said authentication server, said request specifying at least one action for managing the user accounts of the namespaces to be performed in relation to the namespace service.

Claim 40. (original) The system of claim 39, further comprising a nexus database storing administration information selected from a group consisting of an affiliate list, namespaces, the location of the user databases, and administration server information.

Claim 41. (original) The system of claim 39, wherein the authentication information comprises a login and password associated with each user.

Claim 42. (currently amended) The system of claim 39, wherein the plurality of administration ~~server~~servers and authentication server communicate on the data communication network via a simple object access protocol (SOAP).

Claim 43. (currently amended) The system of claim 39, wherein the plurality of administration ~~server~~servers is associated with an affiliate selected from a group consisting of an application service provider, an Internet service provider, a namespace owner, and a namespace provisioning partner.

Claim 44. (currently amended) The system of claim 39, wherein the user obtains a namespace identifier from the authentication system via the plurality of administration servers.

Claim 45. (original) The system of claim 44, wherein the namespace identifier is an electronic mail address associated with a user account with the authentication system.

Claim 46. (new) The computer-readable storage media of claim 1, wherein each namespace is registered with a domain name service, each registered namespace having user accounts which have access to a service associated with the registered namespace.